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The Hebrew Contribution to the Americanism of the Future

By

HARTLEY BURR ALEXANDER

Professor of Philosophy
University of Nebraska

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The Hebrew Contribution to the Americanism of the Future

By Hartley Burr Alexander

I COME before you speaking not merely as a Christian to Jews, nor as a member of a race young in civilization to members of a race old in civilization, but first and last as an American to Americans, and as a man of the twentieth century to men and women of the twentieth century.

I

WE of today live in an hour preternatural. The world of men has been convulsed in a sudden and terrible agony. Fired with its own passions and consumed in its own fevers human nature has suffered such a revelation of its own inward constitution, of its depths and its heights, its blacknesses and its nobilities, as comes to the race of men

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at unforeseen periods, trying them with crucial pains, and working upon them like a potent medicine for their elimination or their purification. We of today are like men risen weakly after the passing of a delirium. Our vision is still dazzled and uncertain, seeking the new light, but obscured by the fugitive shades; our hearts are still anxious, quickening with rising hopes or sinking heavily back into dead obsessions; the blood of our life and the breath of our life are still tense and throbbing, and there is a ringing of voices, out of the past, into the future, summoning us insistently into ways that have known us not. The hour breaks hugely upon us, and we stand certain of our sin, uncertain of our redemption, as naked souls before a Judgment.

There was, but a few months ago, one vast and blessed ray of illumination. When the last gun seemed fired and the last shell seemed burst and peace was shouted throughout the four quarters, men rose up with a cheer and sang pæans to the new day. The piaculum had been rendered, the offering had been made, and though the blood of the sacrifice was still undried in the trenches, men felt that their burden had rolled from them and that the day of their salvation was at hand. But not so easily, not so cleanly do we clear us of the peril of our souls. The past, histories old and history new, sets a living seal into the substance of all flesh,

and the wounds heal slowly and the mark is for all time. In the whiteness of the morning we shouted with joy, looking to the East, but with advancing day we turned to one another's faces, and our countenances became troubled. The gladness has faded away, and the world, inward and outward, has grown gray and turbid. On my own native prairies, many a time I have seen a glorious and exultant dawn swallowed up by swift-oncoming bands of ashen cloud, until the whole heavens were obscured with their murk, and what had promised to be a day of splendors became transformed into a dimness of driving rain against which the journey must be urged, retarded by muddied roads, doggedly, tenaciously, cheerlessly, certain only of the coming night, hopeful only of other and purer suns rising to other days to make creation fair. Such a dawn, brief and symbolic, we have beheld, and into such a day we are entering, conscious that our lives must be the lives of wayfarers, that the expiration has not yet been fulfilled, and that the great radiance lies beyond us.

The Struggle Toward a Common Goal

THE men and women of all this world are struggling onward, less strong than weak, less seeing than blinded, into a day of obscurity and darkness.

We of the United States are of their company. It was the great mediæval poet, speaking as such a statesman as perhaps poets and prophets alone come to be, who proclaimed: There is not one goal for this civilization and one for that, but for the civilization of all mankind there is a single goal, the branch and flowering of that stock whose single root is our universal human nature. Seeing ourselves with a near and flattering eye, it is our wont here in America, and our fatuity, to adjudge ourselves happier and more secure of happiness than are other peoples. But in the tale of the centuries and the count of the ages we shall appear yoked to our fellows, as mate to mate, and our one possible virtue will be that we may be shown to have pulled with a little more strength, a little more steadiness, in that toil which yields us our bread, physical and spiritual. There is a goal of all civilization; the past has moved toward it; the present is moving toward it; it is in the pulse of all men; it is in the respiration and the aspiration which are the measures of all human life. We of America can neither evade nor overpass this goal; nor should we seek so to do; for in it, as all our fellows, we live and move and have our being. The future of mankind is our future; for we, too, are men.

There is a single goal of all civilization. This is the fundamental upon which we must build our con-

ception of human endeavor. But I do not understand, and I do not believe that so great a thinker as Dante could have understood, that this fundamental truth implies that the principle of civilization must be uniformity. For the realization of a world in which all men shall be humane it is assuredly not essential that all shall speak a common tongue, or recite a common creed, or that all shall live under a single government or under like forms of government, or that in arts or manners they shall follow an unchanging pattern. The unity of civilization is not to be sought in uniformity, but in harmony—indeed, in the richest possible harmony which is at all compatible with unity: for it is the very trait of civilized life to be lifted up from the monotony of savage life, to become complex, ramified with specialization, varied with subtle dissonances, accordant through the instrumentation of manifold interdependences. The very word civilization, as it were, summons man from the simple and primitive into the midst of the profusion, the labyrinthine order of great cities. It is there, in court and in mart multifarious with life, amid centers of traffic and before houses of state, where all is chaotic to the eye, yet all is synchronized as by a single clock and all is ordered by an accepted law, that we find our proper image of human civilization in its eventual entirety; and thinking upon this image we realize that the citi-

zen of the future must in some fuller sense than we have understood be a cosmopolite, and that the world of men must become a cosmopolis.

The Ideal of a Symphonic Civilization

CIVILIZATION does not mean uniformity; it does mean harmony. This, be it understood, is not a rejection of the principle of limitation; rather, it is the assertion that limitation is essential to civilization. The possibilities of life are not infinite; not all variations are profitable; not all differences are endurable. There are forms of government, there are customs of oppression, there are darknesses of superstition known to the past, which we could ill afford again to endure, and which assuredly the future shall not know. There are races of men who have walked their unseeing way and who are going forever, and there are races among the living who are fated to a like oblivion. If these words seem cruel, conceive what shall be those men who shall live in a period of the future as far from us as the period of the first men is remote from us in the past, and ask these men of the future whom, among us of to-day, they will recognize as their kindred? A feature, a trait, a reverberation of thought, a dream—beyond these we shall not be known. The process of human change is a process of elimination as well as

of accession, of limitation as well as of variation; not alone of growth, but also of purification.

Permit me to revert to an illustration which my words may have already suggested. Civilization is a harmony. Unity is its fundamental; its variety is composed of those melodic tones that fall within the law which this fundamental establishes, departing from it but to return to it, enriching through accord, enhancing through contrast, but always obedient tc its scale. The art of music, as we know it, conforms to principles which are very profound in nature and in human nature, and true with a lasting truth. But its proper materials were not discovered in a day. Out of infinite noises, shouts, percussions, twangs, thrums, the notes and the intervals were selected and refined, and the orchestral keys were set as a law and a limitation. Then alone was symphonic unity made possible and the chant of choric voices. So also shall be our discovery of the whole art of living. Deep in our natures are its principles and its tones are sonant in our lives; but in the past they have been and in our own day they are still engrossed in the clamor and friction and blare of an unpurified world. In some fairer future, under some happier sun, men will have discovered their gamut and their law, and all the varied notes of their aspirations will swell as a majestic chant orchestrally to heaven. For us, gropers after art,

it is but given to catch from the noisy air elusive melodies, prophetic of that day. Such, I believe, is the condition today throughout the whole world of men. Everywhere there is a challenge ringing in the ears, carried as by Aeolian winds, and everywhere peoples are striving to perfect the instruments of their life, to render them, if may be, more capable of the sustained harmonies which the spirit of man dreams even if his hand may not yet execute them. People by people and nation by nation the attunement is being made, and while there are raspings and discords not a few, still we are all, we men, as an eager audience forgiving the jangle of preparation in our anticipation of the glory of the music.

II

The Garden of Eden in the New World

AND as the whole world, so in a special and nearer sense the United States is in the medley of a preparation. Our national problem is analogous to the world problem, and our effort analogous to the world effort. For we, in our own scale, represent a dissonance of instruments, an inharmony of racial and social groups which have yet to discover the law of their accord. We are certainly, one and all, inspired by the same great theme of melodic life, by an ideal composition which shall be our na-

tionality of the future; but we have as yet not mastered or perchance discovered our several parts, and some, I fear, have as yet not perceived the richness and variety which must enter in to make the fulness of its harmony. For the moment there are many who strive with uncertain hands, many who hear only their own notes, many who conceive no power or form beyond a simple unison or the repetition of accustomed figures: they are honest citizens, they are stout Americans, but they have yet to learn that the magnitude of the anthem of the future will come from the voices of a multitude of choirs, each with its part, each with the timbre of its own training and tradition. American citizenship of the future must be, like musicianship of the highest order, an ability to bring the instrumentation of many races and many peoples into one mastering harmony.

I speak of the future; its indications are in the present; and they will be seen, I think, if we but throw into perspective the total human economy of this globe of ours, as history has so far revealed it. It is but four hundred years since Magellan circumnavigated the globe, dividing it once for all into an Eastern and a Western Hemisphere, an Old World and a New. In the brief intervening centuries every land has been charted, every region explored, the whole of Earth mapped and surveyed.

It has been given to us here to live in the day of the climax and completion of this work, for it is in our day that the mysteries of the two Poles have been uncovered and the mysteries of the heavens above us conquered by the craft of men. Our generation knows, as no generation before us ever knew, the full human possibilities of Earth, our demesne, its climes and its tempers, its bounties and its limitations, its hospitalities and its inhospitalities. Dissolved forevermore are the imaginings and hopes and illusions which for thousands of years haunted the minds of civilized men with visions of Isles of the Blessed, of Ultima Thules, of Lost Continents, of Promised Lands and Lands of Refuge. We have staked our claims; we have taken our titles; we have broken the furrows of our boundaries; the plumbline is set in the midst of peoples. What in this Earth men can be, we know, and what they cannot be.

And in this broad economy, here at the beginning of the twentieth century, what of the United States? what is the rôle of our North American mountains and plains and vastly watered fields? As I consider the mapped globe and the peopling thereof, my own mind irresistibly moves backward to the figure of a venerable old man whom years ago I heard lecturing upon our country's destiny. He was not a man of learning; he was unschooled and plain; but there was a fire of zeal in his eye, and his long beard,

as of one coming out of the wilderness, and the sudden animations of his theme, gave to him the aspect of a veritable prophet. He unrolled a map of North America, and pointing to the confluence of the Mississippi, Ohio and Missouri rivers, expounded his apocalypse. The rivers, he said, are surely the Rivers of Paradise, and the broad plains, extending from the Alleghanies to the Rockies, what are they but Eden itself—the Eden whence man had been expelled for his first sin and to which he should return for his great Millennium? Behold, he said, their great figure, set like a divine seal upon the continent, for in their form they symbolize the union of the faiths of the West and of the East, and the unity of the peoples of the whole world: taken together the three rivers are, as it were, the Cross of Christendom, whereas the Ohio and Missouri, forming the arms of the Cross, form also, by themselves, an almost perfect Crescent, the Moon of the Orient. Here Europe and Asia are united in the final realization of human blessedness upon Earth.

The Pioneers and the Newcomers

FANTASTIC as is this image, it nevertheless conveys something of a truth which every American should be brought to perceive. The peopling of this

New World land is from all the continents of the Old. Amid race after race, people after people, of the anciently settled lands, men have been stirred in imagination and in hope by the rumor of a country beyond the seas which should be for them as an inheritance to be entered into, opened in a new spirit of liberty, governed by a new and purer justice, gifted with a deeper and prouder humanity. And race after race, people after people, they have come, until the plains of America are as a place of assemblage and a gathering together of the nations.

Each of these peoples has come with its own color of hope; each with its own promise of work. It is now almost precisely three centuries since the first-comers of my own race found out the New World shores; and in those three centuries, the Anglo-Saxon, in the beginning alone, later on aided by other peoples, has accomplished a labor whose tradition is stalwart and proud. For to him fell the pioneer's task and the post of honor in the vast work of opening up wildernesses and of laying the foundations of cities and of states; and to him it has been given to spread the language and to frame the fundamental laws of the greatest of New World polities. But it has not been, it is not, and it cannot be his alone, by any right of occupation or pre-emption, to shape and limit the whole content of the life of the city whose foundations he has laid.

The building up of a civilization, let me repeat, is complex of aptitudes and powers drawn from many races and from many traditions of culture. And the future civilization of the United States, the future Americanism, while it shall surely retain, doubtless, as its prevailing tone, the color of Anglo-Saxon institutions as here acclimatized, must and should be enwrought and enriched with the manifold gifts which the genus of other peoples have brought to this common shore. Out of Europe and out of Asia and out of Africa they have come, men of many races and many complexions, and the future of America is in their hands.

It is not for all men easily to understand this truth; it is not for all readily to perceive that there must be give as well as take in the intimate process of achieving a national concord. Many there are of the nativeborn who look upon the newcomers as welcome only in so far as they are willing to forget the habits of their fathers and relinquish the customs of their Old-World past; and some there are of those newly come who have failed to discern that the life here opening is a new life, calling for the abandonment of modes and manners that will not bear transplanting without becoming tawdry and meaningless. But time is a potent teacher; and I cannot believe that any man who will seriously think what shall be the Americanism of a thousand years

from now can for a moment doubt that long ere then the discord and disorder which at present beset us will have disapppeared and the racial and cultural antagonisms of this hour will have been brought to one design, harmonius through all its contrasts. The invention of this design is the labor of our present lives.

"The Most Imperishing of Peoples"

I HAVE spoken of the world problem and I have spoken of the American problem, which is like it in character, but lesser in scale and nearer to our lives. I would now speak, with a special illustration, of the mode of union and the meaning of acculturation of peoples within peoples. We come here, into America, like a procession of householders wending its way with gifts of the first fruits, each race and people with an offering unto the future. How shall the gifts be received? How shall the festival be ordered? What shall be the price and what the blessing?

When I consider, apart from circumstances, what should be the most perfect example of a people and a culture which have shown the power of give and take, of combination and assimilation without loss of self-identity, I can give but one unreserved answer —the Hebrew. Here, in the accomplished past, we

have the portrayal of such qualities as are demanded for the salvation of the future; here, in race and in idea, we have the illustration of such powers of union as are demanded of all the races of America in the secure founding of their mutual destiny. Review for a moment the astonishing history of Israel. The first mention of the nation on a profane monument is a boast of their destruction on a stela of the Pharaoh Mernepath, erected about 1223 B. C.—"Israel is desolated; its seed is destroyed." Doubtless the words commemorate no more than a local massacre or the defeat of a band of pioneer warriors from among the Israelitic tribes already hovering near the Promised Land from beyond the Jordan and abiding only the waning of the power of Egypt to enter into its possession. But viewed in the long perspective of history, it is surely intensely dramatic that the first mention of the most imperishing of peoples should be the vaunt of its total destruction. For more than a millennium after the time of Mernepath, Israel was to occupy the land in which he first had encountered her, her brief period of security and kingly glory followed by centuries of terrible national anxiety under the constant threat of the great and rapacious empires by which she was surrounded. Egypt to the south, Assyria to the north, Babylon to the east, Rome to the west, turn by turn they wielded the rod of the oppressor; and wars and

subjugations, destructions and captivities tore at the vitals of the nation's life until she was become as a living and perpetual sacrifice among men. . . .

> . . . the great Exemplar,
> She that was ground unremittingly
> Betwixt the upper and the nether mill,—
> In dreadful alternation bent
> Beneath the supple claws
> Of the lithe Egyptian, or stricken down
> By the muscled bull, Assyria,—
> Zion, builded on an hill!

The Jew: Exemplar of the Future Cosmopolite

IT is with ever undiminishing admiration that I have gone time after time to the Boston Public Library to contemplate the great lunette—for as a work of art it surely is of the great—with which Sargent has surmounted his superb frieze of the Prophets of the Old Dispensation. In this lunette, as it seems to me, he has concentrated the essence and symbolized the enduring meaning of the history of the cradle of human civilization, the ancient Orient. On the one side he portrays the Egyptian Pharaoh, active, powerful, pitiless, with his weighted axe uplifted for the cleaving blow, advancing before his animal gods, and all the tokens of Nilotic splendor; on the other, is the gorgeous and heavy and

cruel Assyrian, he also attended by his beast-gods and monster-gods, and he also with broad blade upraised to strike. The greatness of the material world is in these two figures, in all its arrogance and ferocity, in all its ruthless and fantastic selfishness. Between them, in the image, is the naked and suppliant form of a Son of Israel, surrounded by his bowed and helpless people, uplifting his empty hands toward that fire of the wings of Cherubim from whence Jehovah reaches to stay with his touch the threatened blows.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth,
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.
Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.
The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Surely this psalm was in the artists's thought when he pencilled his design, memorable with the

truth of ages. Today Egypt is no more, Assyria is no more, Babylon and Rome are no more, but she whom they deemed to have broken, Israel, is still a miracle of life among the nations.

In all human annals I know of nothing comparable to Jewish history. There is not only the great fact of that millennium of troubled national existence in antiquity, of which I have just spoken; there is also the yet more remarkable fact of two millennia of a not less afflicted dispersion during which the Jew has maintained his race, maintained his religion, maintained his peculiar culture in the midst of divers and far-separated peoples. He has done this in the face of a constant, often violent, and nearly unanimous hostility; and he has done it in a manner to command the respect of all men. He has done it, moreover, in a fashion to read a lesson for the future of mankind; for if there is today on earth a man who is both intensely individual and broadly cosmopolite, it is the Jew. He, more than any other man, has discovered the secret of accommodation to the usages of fellow men without imitation of them, of cooperation without identification, of harmonization without mere unison. He lives in Rome, and is not as the Romans; he is in Asia, in Europe, in Africa, and is not Asian nor European nor African, but is everywhere a kindred apart, related to all men, but confused with none,—such a man, in short, as in the

millennial day of the world's full civilization men of all races must become.

The Spiritual Treasure of the Hebrew

SUCH is the spectacle, the miracle, which the Jew presents in human history. And where is the source and secret of this amazing vitality? To seek it in any material thing were to make jest with reason. The jewelled magnificence of Solomon was but a passing dream; the gold and silver vessels of the ancient temple are long-lost baubles. In olden days material wealth and power lay with the empires of the river valleys and the sovrans of the seas—all long vanished away. It is not through material things that men preserve their lives, and no lesson of this truth is more vivid than the lesson of Judah. Rather, the power to live is found through an inner trust and an inward consecration such as all Hebrew history attests. Our treasure out of antiquity is neither in corn nor gold nor public works, but in the records of human experience and the reflections of human conduct as art and literature portray them. Our inheritance out of the past, as our heritage unto the future, is, and can only be, of a spiritual, and not of a material substance.

Did any people apprehend this before the Hebrew? Has any held to it with a more tenacious conviction?

Assuredly it is present in the legends of the covenants with the patriarchs; it is in the farewell exhortation of Joshua and in the exordium of the Books of Judges; it is in the hero tales, Moses, David, the Maccabees; and above all it is the soul and inspiration of the books of the Prophets. "While philosophy had for the Jews no meaning," says Professor Butcher, "history had a deeper meaning than it bore to any other people." And he adds: "Nor was the history of their past merely a possession of their own; it was a treasure they held in trust for the human race." And these words come very near to the quick of that vitality which has made Israel unique among peoples. From their earliest records onward the Israelitic families have been history-conscious; they have felt the breadth and edurance of human destiny; they have perceived that the movement of man's life is not one of simple change, but a movement with dramatic episodes and climaxes and with a meaning that lives behind and beyond its scenic shifts; and they have given, to all the Western world, not only their own conviction of the reality of this drama, but the very form in which they themselves have cast it. From the Greeks we of the West derive our arts and our sciences, our politics and our profane letters; but from the Hebrew we derive the whole imaginative frame within which human life is conceived and through which spiritual

truth is made vivid and moving. Israel has been gifted with a conception not only vast enough to preserve them living throughout the centuries, but in its strength sufficient to command and engross the imagination of half the world of men. Nor can such a feast be due to any other accident than truth itself, that truth of human nature which, whether through philosophy or science, art or religion, comes at the last invariably to an expression in which the world of fact resolves into an apocalypse and the foundations of life are discovered to stand in its prophecies. Here we have before us a truly tremendous illustration, not only of how spiritual forces can act to preserve a nation through unparalleled trials, but even more of how the thought of one people may become the life of many.

III

THE sense of the significance of history, of the meaning of before and after in human events, of life as a growth with a fruition, marks the body of ancient Hebrew literature with a singular unity, like the stamp of a single seal; it touches the sacred writings not merely as the atmosphere of a tradition, but as the genius of a people and as a philosophy of the world. It is not extraordinary, it was indeed inevitable, that such a conception, recorded in the

thought and, as it were, expounded in the dramatic facts of Israeltic history, should have laid hold profoundly upon the imaginations of the peoples who have adopted the Hebrew writings as in part their own dispensation. The course of Christian civilization is deeply guided by this same sense of teleology, this same demand for cosmic drama as the background of life, which permeates the Hebrew Scriptures. It is doutful if any one other conception has so constantly and variously entered into the formation of our culture. If anywhere we are to seek for the manifestations of acculturation, it is here.

One need not go beyond our American history for the obvious illustration. Three hundred years ago the Pilgrim colonists of Masschusetts were contemplating their westward voyage; the range of their ideas would have been utterly simple had they not possessed one inestimable record of human experience, the Bible. This book formed their minds and dominated their characters; its conceptions were their conceptions; and any reader of Governor Bradford's moving journal will perceive at once that the key to the whole enterprise was a conviction of the sanctity of covenants and beliefs in a Providential guidance through the wilderness into a Promised Land. Not less striking as an example, as it was not less arduous as an undertaking, was the migra-

tion of the Mormons, in the last century, into the deserts of the West. Here again the intellectual and moral foundations for a truly impressive achievement in statecraft were inspired primarily by the Old Testament writings; and fantastic as some phases of Mormonism are, as a whole the movement stands forth as a notable instance of the capacity of men to be moved to great hazards and high action by the ideals of another race remote in land and time. Nor is it only such religious groups as the Pilgrims and the Mormons that have been moved by these ideals. Take the messages of the Presidents of the United States, especially those which have been composed upon occasions of great public moment, and there will be found throughout them, running like a clear course, this same simple yet austere confidence in the justifications of history, not for the United States alone, but for the United States as a participant and a maker in the whole movement of Earth's nations.

The Hellenic and the Hebraic

I DO not, of course, mean to say that no nation apart from the influence of Hebrew tradition has felt, or would feel, the significance of history: that were notably false. But I do assert that no great literature is so penetrated and so toned by such a

conception as is the Hebrew, and I also say, what is patent truth, that it is just in its Hebraic tone that this conception has been assimilated into Occidental civilization, and I think in an especial degree into democratic civilization. It is a commonplace of the history of our culture that the roots of what are highest in it are two, an Hebraic and an Hellenic. From one and the other of these we derive most of the conceptions by which we order our lives. In many particulars there are contrasts between the two types of heritage, but there are also not a few striking parallels and in certain cases at least there are subtle amalgamations of elements derived from each.

I have in mind certain ideas that move very deeply in our institutions and in our modes of thought,— so deeply that they may indeed be termed forms of conduct. The idea of Law is one of those; and the idea of Justice, which is both the motive and the measure of law; and a third is the idea of Wisdom, as the ordinator of life; and a fourth is the idea of Providence. Each of these ideas is pillar-like in the edifice of our civilization, and all of them, in the forms which they bear, derive from both the Greek and the Hebrew sources. They are complex as great ideas always are, and in a particular sense they are complex of their double origin, through which, if they are to be understood in their full

bearing on our lives, it is most instructive that they be seen.

Consider the first of these, the idea of Law. Both peoples, Greek and Hebrew, were intensely conscious of this, and each possessed a variety of terms by which to characterize it: for the Greek, law was *nomos*, a thing apportioned, *thesmos* or *themis*, a thing established, *dike*, a custom-sanctioned right, or it was a decree (*psephisma*) or enactment of the people; for the Hebrew, it was *torah*, a direction, *mishpat*, a judgment or it was a testimony, a precept, a thing engraven, a commandment. Both groups of expression rest upon similar backgrounds of experience, and yet, even in the nomenclatures, there is always some hint of the cleft-like divergence of the final conceptions. For the Greek thought leans, as the terms themselves indicate, toward the structural, the constitutive aspect of law; hence towards its objective source and measures. "All human laws are fed by one law, the law divine," says Heraclitus, "which prevails over all, and suffices for all, and surpasses all"; and herein, at its beginning, he expresses the spirit of that Greek philosophy whose great quest was the discovery and contemplation of the laws of nature, not that man might dream of their alteration but that he might compose his soul in conformity with them. The Hebrew conception, on the other hand, has in it throughout

something of that sense of moral peril—fear lest the law be broken, fear lest nature veer man from rectitude—which is symbolized in the image of Moses when with anger he waxed hot and cast the tables out of his hand and brake them beneath the mount. There is a radical difference between law as the formulation of custom, ours or nature's, and law as the instrument and expression of a good to which men but precariously hold; and it is this difference which separates the Hellenic and the Hebrew, the scientific and the normal elements in our own conception of the ordering of life. Nor need I point out that priceless as is the ideal of form and structure which the Greeks have given us, it could be but empty and monstrous were it uncorrected by the not less priceless insight into man's moral responsibility which is the rock upon which Hebrew culture is built.

Prometheus and Job

THE conceptions of Justice and Wisdom show the same type of divergence, as between the two peoples. At its height, in Plato, Justice was for the Greek a harmony of the virtues, an inward comportment, almost a bearing, an attitude; for the Hebrew it was an emergence from trial, a justification, the triumphant righteousness of a man passed

through burnings, like the three brethren of Daniel. The active, the dramatic element is felt to be essential; there must be a moral revelation; there must be an agony and a theophany: and the ancient books abound in the illustration of how a man must wrestle with angels, of how he must grind the mill of strangers, of how he must be proven by famine and by pest, that his salvation may be secure. Similarly, of Wisdom. Aristotle, with his meticulous classifications, sets in series art (*techne*), science (*episteme*), prudence (*phronesis*), wisdom (*sophia*), and intuition (*nous*); and with Greek inevitability, he finds essential Wisdom to lie in the union of science and intuitive reason within a sphere which is in fact contemplative, and not active. In contrast the Hebrew conception of Wisdom—again dramatic—is a combination of practical sagacity and of wistful faith. The practical sagacity is witnessed in the wisdom of Solomon, in his traditional judgments, in the proverbs and maxims which bear his name; the faith, at times rising into a veritable passion for illumination, is source of most that makes sublime the Books of the Prophets and the Psalms of the Temple service.

All of these conceptions—Law, Justice, Wisdom, —are colored by the fourth, that of Providence. The similarities and contrasts of *Prometheus Bound* and the *Book of Job* have fascinated many minds and

have been many times expounded. Nevertheless, I do not think the subject yet exhausted; and in particular the comparison affords an enlightening insight into the essential bearings of the idea of Providence. The name Prometheus, like the word Providence, means foresight; but the foresight of the Titan is distinctively an inactive and indeed helpless contemplation of the inevitable course of Nature. Prometheus draws a proud, if bitter consolation, from his apprehension of *Ananke*—Necessity, those eternal and inevitable laws of nature from whose operation not Zeus himself can escape; his sufferings are bearable not because he looks forward either to vengeance or vindication, but because he knows that in the roll of centuries injustice shall find its balance, and with ageing Time the scales weigh even. The whole tragedy impresses one as if it were but an enlargement of that strange saying accredited to Anaximander, "all things shall make reparation to one another for their injustices, according to the ordinances of Time." Contrast with Prometheus, Job. Here is no clear-sighted knowledge of Destiny. Rather, at the last as at the first the smitten and tried patriarch is ignorant of all save the greatness of the power that encompasses him—of this, and of the great fact, fundamental for him, that somehow he can trust this power. Prometheus is silent at the first, self-sufficient throughout,

and hopeless everywhere. Job is silent at the last, self-sufficient nowhere, and never utterly despairing. And the reason is that Prometheus has his eyes fixed upon high and indifferent fates; Job, with the men of his race, can conceive of no allotment unaccompanied by a divine solicitude. Over against the saying of Anaximander I would set that of Ecclesiastes which, if I interpret it aright, goes to the heart of the Hebrew conception of the ways of Providence: "He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." This is the denial of all Promethean knowledge; it is also the assertion of the great article of faith, that all things become beautiful in their season, and that all are the handiwork of a Maker who is likewise a caretaker.

The Danger of a Weak Hellenism

IS it not evident, in all that I have shown, that the characteristic color in all of these ideas—fundamental to Greek, fundamental to Hebrew, fundamental to Americans of today—is given to their Hebraic form by that very concern for what is significant in history, for what is dramatic and moving in human life, which has seemed to us the core of the Hebrew genius? And is it not evident again

that these conceptions, of Law and Justice and Wisdom and Providence, with which are interbound the whole group of conceptions which we call the hope of human progress, get their moving, their activistic as distinct from their contemplative values, from the Hebraic root? If so, assuredly I can point to no matter in which we of the United States are today more deeply indebted, to none in which our civic inheritance is more essentially seated, than to this very activism of our political ideals, resting upon faith that the Providence of this world deals fairly with us, leads us even in the darkness of our own knowledge, and holds us to the conviction that Law and Justice and Wisdom are to be passionately sought and maintained, even at the peril of our souls.

Further, I have this to say. In the United States today and in all Western civilization, there is a terrible tendency of the educated classes to lapse into a weak Hellenism, a *laissez-faire* in the moral and political life, evading responsibility, abjuring faith in any essential righteousness. Materialism, cynicism, a vague and sentimental æstheticism, socialism without heart, rationalism unwarmed, these are the commoner forms of the disease. For disease it is, and should it eat to the center of our national life, it would surely destroy all therein that makes us worth preserving. As yet, I believe, the great

body of our citizens live in the wisdom of the Jews, not of the Greeks; and that they do this with a true instinct for life is hugely lessoned by history itself; for the Hellenes of old are long passed from this earth, while the Jews still live, an example unto all men of the vital power of ideals to preserve a people. Nor from the America of today nor the America of the future can we afford, for an instant, to relinquish that gift of faith which we owe to them—and which to us as to them is a source of confidence and of life.

IV

The Vision of the Messianic Era

THERE is yet a final gift of Hebrew culture of which I would speak. One of the series of the Sargent paintings in the Boston Public Library, to which I have already alluded, is entitled "The Messianic Era." In artistic spirit, as in theme, it is utterly different from the grandiose lunette which depicts the afflictors of Israel: in place of a troubled and barbaric pomp, it portrays the serenity of hpoe, and the the whole composition is toned by an atmosphere of grace and charm and of humane delicacy. On either side the doors of the future are being drawn by obedient wardens, while between them,

festooned by the golden wealth of the vine, enters the Messiah, exalted, leading his people into the New Eden. The wonderful blue of the background, the rich golds of the vine, give a color that is splendid without ostentation, altogether befitting the buoyant beauty of the high conception.

This picture, to my eye, is the appropriate complement of the other, not only in artistic spirit, but in the range and reach of its suggestion. For history, which recounts the past, is never truly composed unless it also lives on into the future; and a race gifted with a sense of the significance of the past must be thereby a race gifted with hope of the eras that are to come. I have said that history is a dramatic thing; and this is so not merely because our historical imaginations inveterately dramatize, but because—as the story of Israel itself attests—the facts of human life and of all life are by nature dramatic; nay, if I play upon the sentence which Plutarch ascribes to Plato, because God always dramatizes! It is not geometry, it is epic and tragic sublimity that at the last give us the image of divine thought. This Israel saw, and in conception it completed the vast drama which begins with Eden and the Fall and moves episodically through the great historical agonies, by a final vision, a theophany clear and luminous in the engloried morning of the Messianic Era.

ALL peoples have their idealisms, and many men have found their spiritual inheritance in a lost Paradise or a Utopian commonwealth; yet of them all, has another matched Zion? The vision of an Anointed King returning to the Holy Mount, of a renewed and purified Temple, of an untroubled possession of a Land of Promise, and of an empire imposed not by the sword but by the spirit of the Law, such a vision is surely no mere flush of the fantasy; rather it springs from the very fountain of desire, where human desire is purest, and from instincts which are more in the nature of graces and intuitions than of helpless dream. It is through such vision that we declare our shortcomings and set our measures, and it is in emulation of such vision that we uprear the pillars of our nobler humanity. Man, even in the moment of his apocalypse, stands with feet to earth, but his eyes are on the stars.

Zionism, as the Messianic Hope, as an everlasting inspiration, seems to me most beautiful, the true splendor of the crown of Judah. Of its other, more practical, phase, as a resettlement of the ancient domain, I do not conceive myself qualified to speak more than tentatively. I can see that for Jews in lands where Jews still eat their bread in bitterness a new Palestinian Zion may come as a bright re-

demption; and I can understand that this reason alone might fully justify the material effort. But for the spiritual gift, and the true greatness of Judaism, I do not conceive that the physical restoration can be helpful. Long since Judaism has outpassed the confines of a narrow geography, as long since, even in the days of the later prophets, it had outpassed the narrower confines of race. It has become a force of the human spirit, and therein it has entered into the realm of things intemporal. Here in America we desperately need the fervor of the idealism of every race and group that takes up our citizenship; and as an American I could not but feel dimly envious of any other of earth's lands which should draw hence the spiritual allegiance of my fellow citizens; but of that Zion which should be open to all men and should be the illumination of all states, no man need be envious. Plato was wiser than his own Hellenism when he made Socrates say of the ideal city: "In heaven there is laid up a pattern of it, methinks; which he who desires may behold, and beholding, may set his own house in order; but whether such a one exists, or ever will exist in fact, is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other." In the end the greatness of all human vision, like the completed significance of history, is to be sought and found "under the form of eternity."

I HAVE here used the famous phrase of a Jew who, disowned in his own day, is proudly recognized today both for beauty of character and power of intelligence by both Jew and Christian. Spinoza, simply human in his life as citizen, was in soul nobly detached from the morass of false conceit into which engrossed men pitifully fall. He beheld life with a great, white sanity; and loving freedom with the passion of one who could perceive the full degradation of enslavement, he pointed the way to it, through the quiet of the intelligence, into the realm of ideas, under the form of eternity. Like a Messiah he opened the gates to the ample serenity of the morning, and he made himself king in a transcendent kingdom. Spinoza was no Jew in the olden tradition; he was no Christian; but he was a noble and a great citizen of the modern world, bearing thereto a treasure which it was his to discover because he had been a Jew and shared in the inheritance of Israel. And therein he figured what the Jew might mean, as a man of his kind among mankind.

I would make one last comparison, and beside Spinoza I would set the figure of that great Englishman, his contemporary, who was also a lover of freedom, and who, after a high participation in the activities of the state, spent his greatest years in

austere seclusion. John Milton was splendid as an English citizen; he was more splendid as an English poet, and as a poet he was more than of his nation. There is no other writer of Christendom whose imagination is so shot through with the sublimities of the Hebrew Scriptures as is Milton's, and none other who may so truly be described as a spiritual son of Israel. Not only in *Paradise Lost*, with its vastly cosmic drama, but also in the gravely noble *Samson Agonistes*, Milton moves in thought with the Hebrew poets and prophets, and as one of their number. Like Spinoza he sought spiritual freedom, like Spinoza he beheld it under the form of eternity; but the manner of his expression is more apocalyptic, more Jewish than is Spinoza's,—as if, in a division of inheritance, these two men of genius, Jew and Christian, had each come to mastery of the other's speech.

Is it not through such spiritual transmissions that we men shall come at last into the reality of our Messianic hope? Into that final Zion whose temple precincts shall be the habitable globe, its courts Earth's nations, and its choirs the antiphonies of languages not uttered as shibboleths but as the diapason of all fine ideals? Whether such an one will ever exist in fact is no matter, for he who hath beheld it will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other.

V

The Hebraic Endowment of America

IN what I have said I have endeavored to set forth what I regard as the greatest contribution of Hebrew genius to our common civilization. The Greeks laid the foundations of those sciences by which we can explain, in a sense, how such a world as ours is possible; but not Greek science, and no abstract science or philosophy, can explain why our world is just this world from among all that are possible. For such an explanation a differing philosophic mode, a teleological, a dramatic mode is alone capable; and such a mode is that in which Hebrew thought is couched; while from the Hebrew it has passed into the center and has set the horizons of Occidental culture. Here is an instance of a very great contribution passed from race to race; and it is also an instance of acculturation in the highest and most lasting sense. One must indeed seek far to discover in the whole world another so eminent instance of the eventual and universal value of the cultivation of a racial genius, or of the possibilities for the final enrichment of human life through the preservation of the several endowments of the families of men. We come as householders in a processional, each bearing the first fruits of his labors, and the

beauty of the feast is in the variety of our offerings. This should be the final image of human harmony and the ideal of civilized attainment.

What, then, of our own American future? I have made my theme the Hebrew contribution to the Americanism that is to be; yet in my discourse I have spoken of the past, and much of the far past. Nevertheless, I trust that I have so spoken that my meaning is utterly clear. For I have sought to show that no worthy past is lost, and that no people emerging into consciousness of the higher things of life can ever lose this consciousness and still be true to itself and mankind; and I have sought to show more particularly that the children of Israel stand among the nations as the bearers of a light that is inextinguishable and as the servitors of a Zion that is eternal. In America, Asia and Europe meet and the whole world seeks the mode of its harmony. For that final music America needs the voices of all its peoples, and the idealisms of all; and where should it find its choir-leader if not from that voice which is not of Europe nor Asia nor any geographical center, but of a people dispersed among all? You will not, I am sure, turn from my reminder that Christianity itself was in origin of a Jewish sect, and I am sure that you will be proud to recognize in the Christian Gospels a Judaic literature which, even if written in Greek, added to the Hellenic world,

and to the whole West, a nobility which no Hellene had conceived. And I trust also that you will be glad to own that even as the Judaism of the Gospels was not lost when they ceased to be merely Jewish, but rather became the vehicle for the well-nigh world-wide transmission of Judaic ideals, so in the future the Jews of America shall not be lost in finding themselves fully American, nor the Judaism of the world in giving to the whole world the height of its inspiration.

In this land of America we are of many peoples, all, save a few thousand Red Men, immigrants within three brief centuries. Together we shall make the future of the country, each bringing thereto the heritage with which his fathers have endowed him. My own sires have dwelt within these shores for more than two hundred years, and they were of a race which has performed a task of which every Anglo-Saxon has the right to be proud. They have opened the wilderness; they have cleft the forest; they have charted hill and plain and they have reared thereon great cities. They have been of a race great in action, and they have set to their sons stalwart patterns. Nor do I believe that the Anglo-Saxon in America is yet a race forespent, nor its deed yet done; shoulder-high we stand, with our fellow-citizens, and our eyes are to the future. As of such a race, and proud to be of such a race, in action

great, I salute you, fellow countrymen, whose race has been among men exalted in the greatness of its conception of action: the words of your fathers have been the thoughts of mine; the deeds of their sons' sons shall be joined to the deeds of the sons of mine.

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